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CIA Control

Sen. Stephen Young (D-O.) is right: A joint congressional committee should be established to oversee the Central Intelligence Agency. Probably nothing will come of the senator's plea, however. It arrives too late. Congress is a centipede with itchy feet, eager to start traveling.

Yet Congress doesn't know how much money it gives CIA. Lawmakers appropriate for the agency under a variety of false labels. Nor does Congress know how, or where, the CIA operates.

Obviously, the entire Congress cannot know—without a serious threat to CIA's vital secrecy. But a select committee could monitor the agency. The Atomic Energy Commission, for security reasons is controlled in just such a way. The system has worked well. No secrets have been compromised because of it.

Through occasional ineptness and bad judgment—some of these probably inevitable in such a large-scale enterprise—the CIA has involved the United States in several serious crises. It ought, for the good of the country, to be subject to the double-check safeguard of legislative review.